



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
Tennessee State Library and Archives

**T. S. (THOMAS SIGISMUND) STRIBLING  
PAPERS, ADDITION 5,  
1916-1982**

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**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

**Creator:**

Stribling, T. S. (Thomas Sigismund), 1881-1965

**Inclusive Dates:**

1916-1982

**Scope & Content:**

Addition 5 focuses on T. S. Stribling (1881-1965), writer and Pulitzer Prize winner, and his wife, Louella Kloss Stribling, of Clifton, Wayne County, Tennessee.

The majority of materials consist of correspondence and clippings. Other items include original manuscripts, photographs, speeches, and a few scholarly articles about Stribling.

For the most part, the correspondence is between Stribling and his wife, though there is some “fan mail” between Stribling and his many readers. Although small in number, the letters are an important complement to the larger volume of Stribling correspondence in the Tennessee State Library and Archives holdings. The clippings contain interviews, book reviews, theater reviews, and information regarding Stribling’s Pulitzer Prize.

The manuscripts include several of Stribling’s unpublished short stories and one chapter of an abandoned autobiographical writing entitled, “Pattern of My Life.” Of considerable value is a complete manuscript of Stribling’s posthumous autobiography, *Laughing Stock*.

**Physical Description/Extent:**

1.5 cubic feet

**Accession/Record Group Number:**

THS 924

**Language:**

English

**Permanent Location:**

THS VI-F-2, Mf. 2027

**Repository:**

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

## **Administrative/Biographical History**

Novelist and short story writer T. S. Stribling became the first Tennessean to win the Pulitzer Prize for literature. Stribling was born in Clifton on March 4, 1881, the son of Christopher and Amelia Waits Stribling. His father had been a Union soldier captured at Shiloh, while his mother's family in Alabama were Confederate sympathizers.

Thomas spent many summers on his maternal grandparents' farm in Lauderdale County, Alabama, giving him a personal perspective on life in the Deep South. These experiences informed his later literary works. Stribling graduated from the Florence (Alabama) Normal School in 1903, taught high school, and soon entered the University of Alabama Law School. After abandoning teaching and the practice of law, he began to write formulaic adventure tales for leading popular magazines.

Stribling's major work as a serious writer came between 1921 and 1938. He achieved success with his first novel, *Birthright* (1921), a book dealing with the problems of a Harvard-educated African American who returns to his hometown in Tennessee hoping to uplift his race. African American director Oscar Micheaux adapted a silent film based on the book.

In the early 1930s, Stribling produced *The Forge* (1931), *The Store* (1932), and *Unfinished Cathedral* (1934), a massive 1,479-page trilogy still recognized as his most significant literary production. Set in Florence, Alabama, and its surroundings, the trilogy portrays the history of the Vaiden family from the beginning of the Civil War through the boom period of the Twenties. In these works, Stribling critically examines the factors contributing to the decline of the planter-aristocrat after the Civil War and the emergence of a new breed of opportunistic, middle-class mercantilists. *The Store* enjoyed the greatest success, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1933. His other novels dealing with the South include *Teeftallow* (1926), *Bright Metal* (1928), and *Backwater* (1930).

Stribling did not write anything of major significance after *These Bars of Flesh*, published in 1938. He brought his career to a close in the late 1940s and

early 1950s by writing detective stories for commercial pulp magazines. After years of residence in Florida and New York City, Stribling returned to Clifton in 1959. He spent several of the last years of his life there, dying of cancer on July 8, 1965, in Florence, Alabama. His autobiography, *Laughing Stock* (1969), was published posthumously.

Combining keen insight and open receptivity to the life around him with a penchant for intricately designed plots, Stribling produced a collection of novels that provided good reading and illuminated Southern social conditions from the Civil War to the Roaring Twenties. As a pioneer in the Southern Renaissance, Stribling helped forge a new view of the South and cleared the way for Southern authors in the ensuing decades. In short, Stribling helped create modern Southern literature; in doing so, he has earned a place in the American literary chronicle.

## **Organization/Arrangement of Materials**

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material, with photographs at the end.

## **Conditions of Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access:**

No restrictions

### **Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:**

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## **Index Terms**

### **Personal Names:**

Stribling, Louella  
Stribling, T. S. (Thomas Sigismund), 1881-1965  
Stribling family

### **Subjects:**

Literature and folklore--Southern States--History--20th century  
Authors, American -- Tennessee

**Geographic Names:**

Clifton (Tenn.) -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Florence (Ala.) -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Document Types:**

Clippings (Information artifacts)  
Bible records  
Correspondence  
Manuscripts for publication  
Genealogies  
Photographs  
Speeches

**Acquisition and Appraisal****Provenance and Acquisition:**

Gift of Amelia Hughes of Waynesboro, Tennessee, in 2006.

**Processing and Administrative Information****Preferred Citation:**

T. S. (Thomas Sigismund) Stribling Papers, Addition 5, 1916-1982,  
Tennessee State Library and Archives

**Processing Information:**

Processing completed by Gregory Poole on February 20, 2008. Finding  
aid reformatting completed by Kate Williams on March 23, 2012.

**Electronic Location and Access:**

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/ths924.pdf>

## DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

### CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Clippings -- Miscellaneous		1	1
Clippings -- Miscellaneous		1	2
Clippings -- Miscellaneous		1	3
Clippings -- Miscellaneous		1	4
Clippings -- Miscellaneous		1	5
Correspondence -- Baker-Daniels		1	6
Correspondence -- Darrow-Hughes		1	7
Correspondence -- Hull-Luzgatto		1	8
Correspondence -- Lynn-Nicholson		1	9
Correspondence -- Pagnucco-Pinchot		1	10
Correspondence -- Potts-Stribling, J.H.		1	11
Correspondence -- Stribling, Louella (Baker-unnamed)		1	12
Correspondence -- Stribling, Ora-Stribling, Rex		1	13
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Ann-Hughes)		1	14
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Jake-Neu)		1	15
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Painter-Sandy)		1	16
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Stribling, Louella)	1923-n.d.	1	17
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Stribling, Louella)	n.d.	1	18
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Stribling, Louella)	n.d.	1	19
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Stribling, Louella)	n.d.	1	20
Correspondence -- Stribling, Thomas S. (Stribling, Rex-unnamed)		1	21
Correspondence -- Taylor-Wilson		1	22
Genealogy -- Stribling family Bible (transcript)		1	23
Interview -- "One and One-half Minute Sketch for Lowell Thomas," Stribling, T.S.		1	24
Interview -- Radio interview, Stribling, T.S.		1	25
Invitations -- Graduation, Kloss, Louella	1916	1	26
Invitations -- Miscellaneous		1	27
Legal Records -- Will -- Stribling, Thomas S.	1965	1	28
Manuscript -- "A Christmas Venture," Stribling, T.S.		1	29
Manuscript -- "As Is," Stribling, T.S.		1	30
Manuscript -- "The Diary of Two Hoboes," Stribling, T.S.		1	31
Manuscript -- "Flute in the Orchestra," Stribling, T.S.		1	32
Manuscript -- "The Gas Range," Stribling, T.S.		2	1
Manuscript -- "It's Still a Gamble," Stribling, T.S.		2	2
Manuscript -- "Lady Luck," Stribling, T.S.		2	3

Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 1-37, Stribling, T.S.		2	4
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 38-73, Stribling, T.S.		2	5
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 74-119, Stribling, T.S.		2	6
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 120-179, Stribling, T.S.		2	7
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 179-222, Stribling, T.S.		2	8
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 223-280, Stribling, T.S.		2	9
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 281-337, Stribling, T.S.		2	10
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 338-379, Stribling, T.S.		2	11
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 380-426, Stribling, T.S.		2	12
Manuscript -- "Laughing Stock: An Autobiography," pp. 427-473, Stribling, T.S.		2	13
Manuscript -- "A Passage to Benares," Stribling, T.S.		2	14
Manuscript -- "Pattern of My Life: An Autobiography," Stribling, T.S.		2	15
Manuscript -- "Revelations of Louella," Stribling, T.S.		2	16
Poems -- Miscellaneous		2	17
Postcard -- "Centennial Park Nativity Pageant," Nashville, Tennessee		2	18
Printed Material -- "The Policy," Stribling, T.S.		2	19
Printed Material -- "No More 'Treacher Sentimentalities': The Legacy of T.S. Stribling to the Southern Literary Renaissance," Piacentino, Edward J.		2	20
Printed Material -- "The Reputed Demises of Uncle Tom," Durham, Frank		2	21
Printed Material -- "T.S. Stribling: A Checklist"		2	22
Printed Material -- "T.S. Stribling and the South," Dickens, Byrom		2	23
Printed Material -- "T.S. Stribling Museum Proposed Budget"		2	24
Printed Material -- "T.S. Stribling: Pattern in Black and White," Beaker, George J.		2	25
Printed Material -- "T.S. Stribling's Burden of Southern History," Rocks, James E.		2	26
Printed Material -- "Thomas Sigismund Stribling," Bates, Ernest S.		2	27
Programs -- Miscellaneous		2	28

Programs, Theater -- "Rope"	1928	2	29
School Records -- Grade Reports (Columbia University), Stribling, Louella	1928- 1932	2	30
Scrapbook -- Nicholson, Pauline (pages)		2	31
Speech -- Stribling, Louella		2	32
Speech -- Stribling, Louella to Fort Myers Music Club, n.d.		2	33
Voter Registration -- Stribling, Louella	1945- 1946	2	34
Writings -- "The Dream"		2	35
Writings -- "An Invitation to Mollie Rickett's Birthday Party," Stribling, T.S.		2	36
Photographs -- Pagnucco, John		3	1
Photographs -- Pagnucco, John		3	2
Photographs --Stribling, Louella		3	3
Photographs --Stribling, Thomas S.		3	4